

West Lafayette Location
Standard Operating Procedure
Public Information Inquiries

Introduction

The USDA-ARS, West Lafayette, Indiana Location coordinates the preparation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to establish the procedures for dealing with public inquiries.

Purpose

USDA-ARS West Lafayette employees need to know the proper procedure to handle inspections as well as emergency situations that arise at the Location. During, periods of emergency, the public and media both want and need detailed information on protection action to minimize lose of life and property. It is important that the media is managed and that the public is provided with accurate and timely information that has been collected and authorized for release by the USDA-ARS Agency.

Information Requested

ARS is responsible for reporting to the public about its research and other activities and aiding transfer of technology to users. The Information Staff (IS) has the responsibility for translating what ARS scientists are doing into terms the public can understand and appreciate. Refer to Number 150.1-ARS. <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/PDF/150-01.pdf>.

Those holding permits with the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) must be aware that APHIS has the regulatory authority to inspect without prior notice and has included the following language within listed permit safeguards, “Without prior notice and during reasonable hours, authorized PPQ and State regulatory officials shall be allowed to inspect the conditions under which the pests are kept”. Employees should be cooperative and courteous with inspectors. Answer the questions, but only provide the information or files that are specifically requested. Do not volunteer information and do not answer questions that you do not understand, or for which you do not have an answer based on personal knowledge.

As well as USDA-APHIS inspections, during the course of business, we are required to abide by announced and unannounced audits and inspections by other agencies which may visit to perform an audit including, such as, but are not limited to: OIG (Office of Inspector General) Audits; OSHA (Occupational Health and Safety Administration); INDPH (Indiana Department of Public Health); and EPA (Environmental Protection Agency).

Therefore, the following Standard Operating Procedures have been developed to accommodate these events and are effective immediately:

When requested for information, contact the following personnel immediately:

Donald C. Lay, Jr., Location Coordinator	765 496-7750
Larry D. Dunkle, Research Leader, CPPCRU	765 494-6076
Chi-hua Huang, Research Leader, NSERL	765 494-6143
Donald C. Lay, Jr., Research Leader, LBRU	765-496-7750
Jan Overton, Administrative Officer	765 494-9726
Gary Heathman, Safety Chair	765 494-8683
Danielle Cooley, Location Environmental Officer	765 494-5607

In the case of local community concerns, please contact Jan Overton, Administrative Officer (AO) at 765 494-9726 or the designated Acting AO. The AO will notify the MWA SHEM Office, who will in turn correspond with the Area Director, SHEMB and the ARS Public Affairs Office when applicable.

In the case of FOIA requests, please contact Jan Overton, Administrative Officer (AO) at 765 494-9726 or the designated Acting AO. The AO will notify the MWA SHEM Office, who will in turn correspond with the Area Director, SHEMB and the ARS FOIA Office when applicable.

Public Information

Emergency information efforts should focus on specific event-related information. It is important to keep the public informed through regular media releases and briefings.

Any information released to the media must be cleared through the Midwest Area Office (MWAO) and must be timely, accurate and efficient and ensure messages are clear and concise. Local media will generally cooperate in disseminating warning and emergency public information during emergency situations.

Once information is cleared, the following means will be used to provide information and advice to the public:

1. Radio and television broadcasts
2. Local and national newspapers
3. Websites including:
http://www.ars.usda.gov/Main/site_main.htm?modecode=36-02-00-00

Information Needs

The following types of detailed information shall be provided as soon as possible.

What happened?

- Nature of incident of emergency
- Location
- Time
- Situation resolved or response ongoing
- Cause
- What is likely to happen

Current response actions

- What actions have been, or are being taken to protect public health and safety, and public and private property?
- What is expected of the public?.

Known damage

- Homes/Businesses/Government Buildings/Infrastructure

Casualties

- Dead/injured/missing

Evacuations

- Areas/facilities/number of evacuees/reason for evacuation

Status of Utilities

- Power/Telecommunications/Water/Sewer systems/Natural gas

Facility Closures

Organizations Responding

- Emergency services
- Local government
- Volunteer services
- Civil Defense Emergency Management
- Government Agencies

Areas affected by and declared emergency

Planned response activities for ongoing emergencies

Recovery phase

- Assistance programs available

Media Access

Local response agencies will cooperate with legitimate news media representatives and provide appropriate access to information and, other response needs.

Media Identification

Members of the media shall provide suitable photographic proof of identity if requested.